











PEOPLE SKILLS HANDBOOK

DAVE BANKS







THE PEOPLE SKILLS HANDBOOK

DAVE BANKS

The People Skills Handbook Copyright © Dave Banks

This edition first published in 2018

Published in by: Embassy Book Distributors

Distribution Centres:

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the copyright holder.

Page Design and Layout by

Printed:

Contents

	The Essence of People Skills	5
1	The Secrets of People Magnets	2
2	Making First Impressions That Last	11
3	How To Look Your Best At All Times	18
4	Every Person is Special—Let Them Know That	23
5	Listening Works Like Magic	31
6	The Art of Conversation	37
7	Two Magic Words	45
8	How To Be Assertive Without Being Aggressive	49
9	The Art of Persuasion	55
10	Give Feedback, Not Criticism	62
11	Selling the Invisible—The Art of Subtlety in Sales	62
12	Modern Day Communication—Using Digital Media	74

Ross day of

The Essence of People Skills

Healthy relationships are the key to success in any business or profession. Learning to build these connections is a necessary skill in any profession. In order to create a network of lasting relationships, what one requires is *skill with people*.

Have you noticed, be it at your workplace or in a social context, that there are some people who can strike up a conversation with just about anybody? These individuals seem to get people to like them instantly, and rather effortlessly so. Those around them seem to be magically drawn toward them. They are like *people magnets*!

What is that secret quality these people have which attracts others to them? What are they saying that makes others find them so engaging? What are they doing right? And, the million-dollar question—can these qualities and skills be learnt?

The answer is Yes!

You too can master the art of dealing with people, especially once you have discovered the secret

techniques these charismatic individuals use. This book brings together techniques that anyone can apply. The techniques given in this book are not just textbook jargon, but real-life skills that you can use in your everyday interaction with people. Timetested tactics that work—every time.

The world is changing, and so is the way in which we connect with others. With the advent of social media, email, digital technology, video conferencing over mobile phones, and a host of platforms mushrooming across the world, the nature of communication is changing. However, people are still the same, and so is human nature. This book gives you a newer perspective to the age-old art of dealing with people.

What we are going to do in the pages that follow, is capture the essence of people skills. Applying these will instantly improve your interaction with people—both personally and professionally.

Once you have read through the book, observe the way people interact. You will see these principles in action and you will be motivated to use them yourself to become a master at people skills.

Welcome aboard!



The Secrets of People Magnets

"Walk with me for a while, my friend—you in my shoes, I in yours—and then let us talk."

-Richelle E. Goodrich

The art of dealing with people sets the foundation for all partnerships and the ability to understand other human beings, is the first step toward being able to successfully deal with people.

There is a term I have used often through the book—"people magnets". This refers to people

who consciously or unconsciously apply the principles given in this book and are able to easily get their way with those around them. They have understood the universal basics of human nature.

The art of dealing with people sets the foundation for all partnerships.

How do you become a people magnet?

First things first—let us understand a few basic traits that are at the core of transforming you into a popular people's person.

1. People magnets understand that human beings are self-absorbed

Let's face it. If you have a headache and the other person also has a headache, your own headache will be more important to you.

Research shows that 90% of the thoughts we have are self-directed, such as *my* life, *my* goals, *my* work, *my* health, what people think about *me*, etc.; and only 10% are about the people around us and their problems. This implies that the person you are dealing with is also more interested in himself or herself than in you. When you speak to people about themselves, they are more prone to talk to you.

If you want to be popular with people, try talking to them about what *they* find most interesting—*themselves*. You can direct your conversation to topics that either involve the other person or those which the other person finds most interesting. This will make them feel important and come alive.

When you do this, you are able to see the world through their eyes, share their reality, and understand them better as a result. People are, then, automatically drawn to you. They want to converse with you and be around you.

Keep this aspect of human behavior in mind when you are dealing with people.

2. People magnets are able to see the goodness in others. Look around you and you will see that those who respond to the good in others are loved by the people around them

Each of us is a good human being at our core. If you find someone who acknowledges this goodness and speaks to you—without first passing judgement—you tend to take an instant liking to such a person.

Human beings are social by nature. We look for acceptance and inclusion from those around us. That said, we also desire to control our environment, which includes the people around us, to achieve our

Let your initial interactions with people be open, accepting and non-judgemental.

goals. Due to this desire for control, communication and human interaction is often manipulative.

As a result, we find ourselves judging, mistrusting, and looking at others with only a thin veneer of trust. This, then, leaves us feeling vulnerable and on our guard.

Let your initial interactions with people be open, accepting and non-judgmental. People will like you better and will open up to you when you allow them the freedom to be who they are and when you accept them for who they are.

3. Magnetic personalities are not afraid to break the ice

You will notice, if you observe someone who is very popular, that they are usually the first ones to say hello, flash a smile, or even walk up to another person and offer a handshake with a greeting. I have noticed that when I smile at people, they smile back at me. When I greet someone, they are happy to respond. What sets a people magnet apart is that they don't hesitate to take the first step and are comfortable in opening a conversation.

Here's a tip: Keep your tone warm and enthusiastic when you greet people. Notice how their response changes based on your own level of enthusiasm when you open the conversation.

4. Charismatic people are genuinely interested in the people around them

This is what makes them so popular with others. They are *truly* interested in those around them. This single quality can change the way you interact with people. Once you are interested in others, it is easy to start a conversation, get to know people, and build relationships that last.

Let your journey in being a people's person start with these attributes. If you look around, you can see successful people exhibiting these traits.

The chapters ahead expand on each core skill that will put you on the fast track to mastery in people skills.

Making First Impressions That Last

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

-Andrew Grant

We form impressions of people in the first few moments of interacting with them. Psychologists Janine Willis and Alexander Todorov claim, it takes just *one-tenth of a second* for us to judge someone and make a first impression! These impressions are not based on intelligence, logic, or experience—how much of these can you communicate in just a few moments? They are based on how people perceive you or what they hear you say in that very short period of time. As the popular saying goes, *the first impression is the last impression*, which means that we all form lasting opinions of others based on our first interaction with them.

You Can Choose to Make a Smashing First Impression

Let me share some good news—it is entirely up to *you* what impression you create in your first meeting with anyone.

Here's what you can do.

To start with, think of someone who has left a deep, lasting, positive impression on you. Why do you remember them so? What was it that they did? Was it something they said? The way that they dressed? A firm handshake? Their winning smile? Their confidence, or their attitude? Once you visualize that, you have a good idea of what constitutes a good impression.

However, a word of advice—while you may choose to be inspired by someone else, *stay yourself*. You *cannot* be someone else. Learn from those who inspire you, then apply the principles to be uniquely you. The trick here is to visualize how you want people to perceive you and then put your best foot forward. Use your strengths.

Below are some basic things that make an immediate positive impression on people:

1. Grooming

Says celebrity fashion designer Rachael Zoe, "Style is a way to say who you are without having to speak."

Always keep yourself well—and appropriately—groomed. Dirty nails, unkempt hair, unpolished shoes, and odors such as body odor or bad breath will definitely leave a lasting expression, albeit a negative one.

If you were going to a friend's birthday party by the poolside and you met someone who was wearing a suit and tie, what impression would you make of him? Similarly, if you went to a wedding and came across a young lady in torn jeans and a t-shirt, chewing gum noisily, what would you say to yourself about her?

I'd like to share a valuable tip a friend shared with me when speaking on professional attire. This is what she said: "Aesthetics bring agreement." Aesthetics is anything that is pleasing to look at, which includes a person who is presentable. I would rather agree with a well-groomed and well-mannered person than with a shabby one.

2. Body language

Research tells us that when in doubt, in a face-to-face interaction, the brain *will* tend to believe what it *sees* over any other sensory stimulus. Body language, thus, goes on to contributing greatly to the impression we leave on people.

From your stride to your posture; from the tilt of your head to the movement of your hands; from your eye contact to your smile—everything is included in body language.

Your expression, the way you look at people, the way you shake hands, and the way you lean towards or away from the other person contribute to making a lasting impression. When entering a meeting, compose yourself before you enter, rather than simply rushing in. Go in relaxed and you will also put other people at ease.

Shake hands in a way that conveys confidence and strength, though not brute strength. Make sure your handshake is neither limp nor so strong as to crush the other person's hand. Shake hands with everyone—whether man or woman—the same way.

Practice using your *facial expressions* in a mirror relevant to the situation or discussion. Using appropriate facial expressions will allow you to *use less words*, to *show emotion* and to send a message directly to your *audience's minds and hearts*.

It is said that the eyes are the window to the soul. If you want to connect with someone, hold *eye contact* with them a little while longer than usual and give them a small smile and then look away. Don't stare or hold the person's eye contact for too long, which would probably make the person uncomfortable. The idea is to connect—your look needs to communicate that you are interested in the person.

Maintaining the right amount of eye contact—never more than 2-3 seconds—helps create instant comfort, builds trust, and conveys that you are a person with confidence. Practice looking at your

own eyes in the mirror. This will help make it easier to make eye contact—and lasting relationships—with others.

3. Tone of voice

One other critical area of leaving a lasting impression on others is *how* you say what you are saying. You may have an interesting message to give, or something brilliant to say, but if you don't say it using the right *tone of voice*, it can get lost. Identify the message you truly want to give with the words you are saying. You can record yourself on your phone and replay it to see how you sound.

4. Words to articulate your message

Lastly, the *words* you use become an invitation to others for how they should feel about you. Your words, wisely chosen, can leave a lasting impression.

Using appropriate, encouraging words and phrases that enable others to feel good about themselves, and that display no judgment of them, *will* ensure your popularity.

Some bonus tips in making a great impression:

- **1. Be punctual:** Arrive on time. Show people that you value their time.
- 2. Manage introductions: Always say your full name when you introduce yourself to someone. Once they introduce themselves, smile and convey your pleasure at meeting them.

- 3. Build rapport: Shake their hand and ask something about the person. Keep your questions simple, non-personal, but ones that strike rapport. For example, if you are meeting at a public event, asking them, "What do you think about the event?" or "How do you feel about speaker Smith's subject?" is a good way to break the ice.
- **4. Ask simple questions:** Questions such as "Tell me a little about yourself," or "What you do sounds interesting. Please tell me a little more," keeps it light and non-intrusive.
- 5. Exit the conversation: Stay confident and cheerful. Exit graciously by excusing yourself. You could try a line such as: "It has been such a pleasure. I don't want to monopolize your time. So I shall leave you to speak with the others."

If all is well, and it is appropriate, offer them your business card and take theirs in return. Always end with a line such as, "It was such a pleasure meeting you. I hope we stay in touch." Or "Have a wonderful day/evening ahead. It was great meeting you."

If you would like to stay in touch with them, send them an email or a text message the next day: "Hello, I am Adam Jones. It was a pleasure meeting you yesterday. Please do stay in touch."



- Before you master people skills, master yourself.
- Be polite, be confident, and be positive in all your interactions.
- Pay as much attention to your nonverbal cues as your verbal cues.

How to Look Your Best at All Times

"Simplicity, good taste and grooming are the three fundamentals of good dressing and these do not cost money."

-Christian Dior

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

One of the first things that people notice about you within the first few seconds of meeting you is how you look. This matters a lot. For example, if in a first meeting, you look shabby and unkempt, the other person might dismiss you. If, on the other hand, you are well-dressed and otherwise well-groomed, people will want to pay attention to you and listen to you. Here are some things you can do to command attention with just the initial visual people get of you.

Your clothes communicate who you are

Contrary to what one might believe based on popular culture and advertising, you don't need expensive clothes and a huge wardrobe in order to look stylish and presentable. That said, you do need to care about looking presentable. Whoever said that you cannot judge a book by its cover should go try selling a book with a shabby cover and telling people that it has great content.

Always wear clothes that you feel comfortable and confident in

This is not about following the latest fashion and will differ from person to person. Think about the kind of outfits and colors that make you feel—and appear—at ease and in charge. Never wear clothes that are fussy, complicated, or distracting. Someone who keeps fidgeting in a tight shirt or an ill-fitting blouse tends to seem ill at ease and not very approachable.

Dress for the occasion

If you have been invited to an event or an occasion, find out the dress code from the host in advance. If it is a casual event, dress in smart casuals. If it is an event where you will be meeting people who can further your aspirations or help you achieve your goals, dress to impress. Avoid shiny, glittery clothes anywhere, unless you are at a wedding or at a movie awards function! Be yourself. If you are not comfortable wearing a tie, skip it. The important thing is to be presentable and be comfortable and confident in your outfit.

Dress the way you would like to be perceived

If you work in a corporate or bank, stick to classic pieces. If you are a creative freelancer, choose interesting colors, but don't go overboard by wearing neon or mixing starkly contrasting colors. If you work in sales, you want to look professional, yet stay comfortable as you go from one meeting to the next, so choose simple colors and good fabrics that don't get easily crumpled. Stay away from synthetic fabrics, which tend to emit unpleasant odors. Simply put, when you dress up, visualize how you would like to appear to others.

Keep it simple

Former President of the United States Barack Obama wore the same kind of blue suit every single day because he knew it looked good on him and he did not want to waste time every morning deciding what to wear. This is an excellent principle to adopt. Keep six clean sets of clothes to last you from Monday to Friday. Alternatively, you could find two pairs of well-fitting trousers/skirts in neutral colors like black, blue, beige/khaki, or gray and seven different shirts/blouses that you could pair up. Ensure that your shoes are well polished, your socks are a shade darker than the trousers you wear, and your belt is a shade matching your shoes, and then you're set!

If you'd like to keep it traditional, ladies, professional colors such as black, blue, gray, brown, or green are

ideal, along with cleanly painted toenails in neutral colors. If you'd like to go ahead with the no-nail paint look, please make sure your toenails are clean and trimmed, and well moisturised.

All you need are clean, well-ironed clothes that suit you best and accessories that make you look approachable and professional.

Keep it special

I like reserving certain outfits for big meetings and important occasions. I recommend you do this too for two reasons. One, it makes your life easier. Two, you will step out with confidence because you know you've worn this outfit to a similarly important meeting in the past where you left a positive impact.

Accessorize right!

Men, please choose a good watch and keep a smart selection of ties, if your job demands it. Ladies, please add simple, but stylish accessories such as small earrings (never danglers or noisy ones), necklaces, or a single bangle on one or both hands, or a bangle on one hand and a good watch on the other. A smart handbag, neatly closed also creates a great impression.

When in doubt, choose a good semi-formal or formal option and stay away from very bright colors or loud prints. You will never go wrong.

Keep it clean

Finally, remember the details. These can make or break the impression we want to leave others with. Keep your nails clean. Get your haircut on time. Simple as it sounds, make sure you brush your teeth just before you head out for a meeting or an occasion. Use a good body roll-on and then top it up with a good, light perfume. Have you just reached a meeting after a brisk walk cause you were running late? Don't simply rush into the meeting room, take a minute to look at yourself in the mirror. Set yourself in order and walk in with confidence.



Remember...

- Spend some time online or looking at magazines to observe how successful people dress for work. Are there any ideas that you can adapt to your life?
- Shop at good department stores or online stores to buy quality pieces that will last you for a long time.
- Create a range of options for yourself for big meetings and important occasions.
- Focus on personal grooming.



Every Person is Special— Let Them Know That

"It's not your job to get people to like you, it's your job to like people."

-H. Jackson Brown

The need to feel special is a basic human desire. Each of us likes being complimented, validated, and appreciated. This is human nature. Think about how you feel when someone pays attention to your work, or the way you dress and compliments your for it. Guess what? Everyone else also likes it.

Let us delve into what will make people like you.

Praise

In a world that is increasingly becoming 'meoriented,' there is something refreshing and heartening about anyone who makes the time and takes the effort to appreciate the people around them. This does not mean you have to walk around, praising everyone you meet! It just means that you should be generous in your interactions with others and validate their accomplishments. Making someone feel special is not about putting the person on a pedestal or engaging in flattery. It is the act of genuinely praising, acknowledging, and appreciating what is really good in that person. In order to do this, we have to be *interested* in people and be able to observe them. When you look close or listen attentively with an open mind, you will find a number of things to appreciate in others.

The compliments you give people should be genuine. Be specific in your choice of words and let the person know *what* you are appreciating that person for. It gives your words the ring of authenticity.

For example:

"John, thanks for going out of your way and helping me in my presentation. I owe the success of my presentation to you."

"Thanks for being such a wonderful host, Jennie. You made my evening really memorable."

"Liz, I truly appreciate your call and your encouraging words. I needed them the most at that time. Thanks for being there for me."

A few things to remember while appreciating people:

- When you praise someone, don't expect anything in return.
- Taking the name of the person while appreciating them helps build an instant connection.

- If that appreciation is regarding any particular act or circumstance, *do it immediately*.
- You can send a text message, an email, or a hand-written note of appreciation to the person soon after the act.
- A 'like' or a 'comment' on social media works well in today's world, though it is not the same as a personal conversation.
- Make it a habit to send appreciation notes to the people in your business and personal relations once in a while.
- While you can compliment people on what they possess ("Nice tie, Bob!"), what works better is when you compliment a person on what that person does, such as, "The way you made that presentation was very impressive."

As William James, well-known psychologist and philosopher, said, "The deepest principle of human nature is a craving to be appreciated." Start practising this honestly with people around you and see people's faces light up and respond to you. Remember, what you give comes back to you. So if you want to be appreciated by people, give appreciation in abundance.

Speak with integrity and do not fake it

We sometimes tend to give people less credit than is due. That said, false praise is the opposite of not appreciating people and equally damaging. We think that we can fool them, but the fact is that people most often can detect both genuinity and falseness.

Give importance to the person you are talking to by intermittently asking questions such as, "What is your opinion on this?" or "What do you think about this?" This will engage them in what you are saying, and make them understand that you value their opinion.

People can detect fake niceness and it puts them off. Genuine people:

- Talk honestly, with conviction and with confidence and clarity
- Look at people in the eye, ask them about things that may be important to them
- Give importance to the person they are talking to by intermittently asking questions such as—"What is your opinion on this?" or "What do you think about this?"

If you are not in the mood for a very long conversation, or if you are pressed for time, cover the main points and close the meeting or conversation politely. Do not ask questions you don't want the answers to, and appear bored or not pay attention. Fake interest makes it less easy for people to trust you.

Pay attention!

Have you ever encountered a time when you are speaking to someone and that person is busy typing a message on his or her phone? How does that make you feel?

On the other hand, let us say the person is speaking with you and you see their phone ringing, they look at their phone, turn it off and ignore the call, or, if it's urgent, they ask your permission, citing the urgency. How does *this* make you feel? The non-verbal and unsaid statement is: "YOU are more important to me right now than anyone or anything else."

If you are distracted, you are sending the signal that what they are saying and who they are is not important to you. This will only weaken the relationship between you and the other person. In

If you want people to feel special, pay them – not in money but in attention.

the short term, they will really dislike you. In the long run, they will simply choose to forget you.

I remember going in for a meeting and before the start of the meeting the person said, "Give me a moment," and switched his phone to silent mode, shut the laptop on his table, and called his receptionist to say he was getting into a meeting and should not be disturbed. His gesture made me feel very important. This man was giving me his complete attention.

When you make someone feel good about themselves, they shine with their unique brilliance and they will always remember you for it!

Do your homework

If you are meeting someone for the first time, think about why it is important for you to see them. Do some research about them, the work they do, and the topic you wish to discuss. You can rehearse your points ahead of time, which will make you be more prepared. Communication will flow easily.

For example, if you have an appointment to talk to Tom Jones, who works for a major corporate firm and you wish to sell your product or offer to them, put yourself in Jones' shoes. Find out what he does. Work out how your products will solve a problem that Tom has or how he can benefit from your products.

When you make a presentation knowing how you can benefit the person you are meeting, you already have an edge. If I could offer this book on people skills to someone who I already know is looking to enhance his skill with people, it would be the easiest sale I have ever made.

Stay positive and professional

Despite the kind of day you may have had—just a bad day, bad traffic, arguments at home or at the office—stay polite, professional, and positive. Do not carry negative energy into a meeting or when you are on the phone with someone. It will affect your voice and your body language, will shake your confidence, and will impact your clarity. People can

detect it in your tone when you are carrying a bad mood around. Stay calm, and speak well. Do not hem and haw and use words like "umm," "erm," or "like," or phrases like "So, you know," often. It is distracting and makes people take you less seriously.

Celebrate potential

Everyone has the capacity to push their own limits—if they are encouraged to do so. You can be the one who tells people that you believe in their abilities. If you see someone very passionate about something, encourage them. If you see someone who tried and didn't quite make it—remind them it isn't a reflection of who they are and that they're capable of a lot more. When you remind people of what they are capable of, you remind them that they are special, in their own unique way.

So, if you want to be a people magnet and win people over, give appreciation in abundance.



- Everyone wants to be liked and praised, and a people's person recognises that.
- Do not be fake or overdo your praise.
 If you cannot find anything to praise in the person, smile gently and move on.
- Be someone who sees the best in others and helps them see that in themselves. Celebrate their potential!
- Stay confident, clear, and cheerful.
- Treat everyone with respect—the most valuable thing you can offer to a person is your time and attention.



Listening Works Like Magic

"God gave us two ears and one mouth, so we ought to listen twice as much as we speak."

-Epictetus

Listening is the most vital part of any effective, engaging, and productive conversation. The wiser the person, the less they will speak and more they will listen. Effective listening skills are the foundation for all relationships, be they business or personal.

The ability to communicate effectively is vital to your success with people, and effective listening is crucial to effective communication.

Being a good listener involves receiving information, understanding it, evaluating it, and then remembering and responding to it.

A key quality to listening is to pay attention to the words spoken with the intention of understanding what the person wishes to say. Every person wants to be understood when he or she communicates. When

you listen rather than just hear, and let the person know that you have indeed understood what is said, you have *completed* the cycle of communication.

Do not let your perceptions and prejudices interfere with your listening. Communication is a two way process, and a good listener is aware of that. *Listening* implies active participation, as opposed to just *hearing*, which is passive.

A good listener will make the person they are in conversation with *want* to talk. And how does he do this? Well, he looks interested and pays attention. Though he never interrupts the speaker, he is involved in the conversation and asks questions or clarifies a point from time to time. His body language seems to say, that he is enjoying having this conversation.

There are two components for successful listening: attention and reflection.

Attention: Attentive listening is when we listen to a person's thoughts and ideas with complete attention, sending the message that you are interested in what they are saying and what they have to offer.

To focus on the individual who is speaking and what is being said, good listeners pay attention to:

- Key words and phrases
- The tone and volume of the speaker, to understand what is of importance to them about the subject they are talking about
- Their body language

Reflection: Reflective listening is listening to understand a speaker's thoughts and ideas—along with the feelings that the speaker may not be voicing. To display reflective listening, good listeners:

 Repeat the keywords and phrases the speaker is using. They will be most likely repeating or stressing on these words

Paraphrasing the speaker's thoughts using their own words to show what they have heard

For example, let's say a friend of yours is telling you about a bad day with her boss: "My boss is always talking only to this other colleague of mine and whenever I go to her, she always says she has no time." You could display good listening by saying, "So it seems like you feel your boss is ignoring you." Do remember to keep it as non-judgmental as possible.

To really improve your listening skills:

Be in the present moment: While listening, you need to make sure that you are with the speaker in the present moment. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I listening to what the other person is saying or am I anticipating what he or she will say next?
- Am I so eager to make my own point that I have stopped listening?

In either case, you lose the actual opportunity of listening, because you are busy judging, forming opinion, and waiting to make your own point. All this distorts the ability to listen.

Listening is the most important weapon in your arsenal.

Listen to people's emotions: Sometimes, a person keeps rambling or veers off topic and starts talking out of context. Although it may be frustrating, if you listen attentively, the person may just be communicating emotion they might not share in as many words otherwise. The person is not guarded during this time and may give you a lot of information about what motivates them. It is very important to listen to people's emotions and respond to them. For example, a wife says to her husband, "Your work is more important to you." If the husband listens to the emotions rather than the words said, he would probably hear, "You don't give me enough time and attention." If you are able to listen to people's emotions in addition to their words, you can qualify as a good listener.

Listen with an open mind: The most important thing while listening is to listen with an open mind. Rather than constantly analyzing whether or not you agree, try listening to the person completely and then decide. This allows you to give all your *units* of attention to the speaker. Choosing to agree—or not—is something you can do once you have heard the person out.

What you say after they've finished talking, basis these observations, will make them marvel at your listening skills.

Here are a quick set of do's and don't's for effective listening.

While listening, do	While listening, don't
Stay in the present.	Let your mind wander. Don't fidget or play with your phone.
Acknowledge the speaker at regular intervals so they know you are tuned in.	Stay silent, even if you only mean not to interrupt.
Keep an open mind so you can absorb what they saying and learn and understand it better.	Judge the speaker or preempt them before they finish saying what they have to say.
Maintain eye contact and face the speaker to show you are interested.	Look distracted.
Allow the person to finish their thought before responding.	Try to one-up the speaker by interrupting them.
Pay attention to non-verbal cues and understand what emotions they are communicating.	Ignore non-verbal cues.
Ask informed questions and engage with them.	Change the subject or dismiss the speaker before the communication is complete.



Remember ...

- Be present to the speaker when listening.
- Listening is not about you, it's about the speaker. Let the other person speak without interruption.
- Listen to their spoken words and unspoken feelings.
- Don't let your eagerness to make a point stop you from listening to the point that is being made.



The Art of Conversation

"Conversation should be pleasant without scurrility, witty without affectation, free without indecency, learned without conceitedness, novel without falsehood."

-William Shakespeare

A good conversation is all about give and take

Let me start this one with a story. A few days ago, as I was entering the elevator in my apartment building, two very pleasant ladies stepped in at the same time. As I had not seen them before, and it seemed like they were new to the place, I broke the ice with a smile and a greeting. I started a simple conversation:

"Hello. Did you folks just move in?"

They smiled back and one of them answered, "Yes indeed, only a week ago."

"And where from?"

They replied, "From the United Kingdom."

So we got talking. I asked about their work and they asked about mine, and by the time we reached the twelfth floor, we had found two common

A good conversation is an art that can open many doors.

interests, one common friend, and a potential business collaboration.

Your smile is a powerful tool to open any interaction as a prelude to a conversation. Just the random act of opening a simple social chat opened a window of opportunity.

When engaging in a conversation, observe people. They will provide you with clues on what to talk about. You must be an involved, active listener, one with some thoughts and opinions of your own, to take a conversation forward. Most people want to converse with someone who can see things from their perspective.

Here is another example:

I was at a business meeting where I was interacting with a client for the first time. Instead of getting right down to business, I opened with some small talk, getting to know the person and his interests. It turned out we were both fond of travel and could exchange notes on various places. This icebreaker gave us common ground and made him more receptive to my proposal. It also gave me the chance to ask questions like:

- "What are the places you have travelled to?" (allowed him to share his interests)
- "What do you usually like to do when you travel?" (let me know his hobbies)
- "Where do you plan to travel next?" (gave me a glimpse into his dreams and plans)

Doing this not only makes the other person feel important but also keeps the person fully engaged in the conversation.

Once you know some details, use them in your next conversation. For example, ask them, "So how is your son doing in college?" or "What did you think about last night's tennis match?" This gives them the message that you care enough to remember details about them.

Think about it. If a customer or vendor calls you and you both know about each other's' interests, doesn't it make the conversation smoother? You can talk more than just business and the social touch makes the deal so much easier. I would rather do business with someone I know than a stranger trying to sell me something.

Here are some tips that will help you become a great conversationalist:

1. Choose the right time and the right people

I chose to speak to my new neighbours because I wanted them to feel welcome in the building. It was

appropriate for me to do so. And they engaged with me in a conversation, which gave me the permission to continue. If they had only smiled back or stopped after the first answer, I would have backed off.

2. Don't hesitate to initiate

For most of us, taking that first step of beginning a conversation is the most difficult. Smiling at people and exchanging greetings helps break the ice. Create instant connections by asking them questions about something that you might have in common with them. For example, if you meet someone with a particular book in their hand, and you too are fond of reading (and you must be, since you have *my* book in your hand!), ask them what they think about the author or whether they have read other books from the same author, and if not, tell them about a particular book you've read that you found interesting, because this will surely take the conversation to the next level.

Just be mindful of not coming across as condescending, patronising, or overeager.

3. Listen more than you talk

Richard Armour, noted American poet and author, said, "It is alright to hold a conversation but you should let go of it now and then."

Contradictory as it may sound to the first point and to the topic at hand, the art of great conversation lies in the listening as much as in the talking. The more you listen and link your thoughts and responses to what they said, the better people will *perceive* you to be a great conversationalist!

4. Take their name

People love the sound of their name, so address them with it: "So what do you think about this proposal, Jane?" This will create a much deeper impact than just saying, "So what do you think about this proposal?"

If you hear a different sounding name for the first time, make the effort to learn how to pronounce their name properly. They will remember you for it!

5. Ask people about themselves

It could be their family, their background, their work and career, or their hobbies. Frame the questions based on the person and the situation. You will be surprised how easy it is to keep a conversation going when people are talking about themselves.

6. Express your interest in the person you are speaking with

Focus on the person talking, nod your head, and add "hmmms" and "uh-huhs" at appropriate moments. Don't get a lost or bored look in your eyes or on your face when someone starts to talk. Make an effort to stay genuinely interested.

7. Prepare conversation starters

Link what the other person is saying to something you like to do, something you believe in, or something you are passionate about. Share something about yourself.

People do business with people they like. People like people who they can converse easily with.

I like to talk about a book I have read or a place that I travelled to.

8. Be a storyteller

When you have an opportunity, tell a story. People love stories and anecdotes and it makes your conversation more engaging.

Steering a conversation

If you wish to control a conversation, here are two tips. To keep the person speaking, you could use a technique called "*Echoing*" where you repeat the last word or phrase that they said.

For example someone says to you, "I am going to London," and you reply, "Oh, London. Where?" And they go on to tell you more.

Another tip is to just nudge the conversation. The person says, "I am going to London" and you say, "That sounds nice. Business trip or leisure?" The person gets the message that you are listening and interested. This encourages them to continue to tell you more.

Closing a Conversation

To get them to close the conversation, you can either:

- 1. Summarize the conversation by saying, "That was really nice to know. So, to put it in a nutshell:
 - · You are interested in the concept
 - You would like to see the presentation
 - We meet on Tuesday evening for further discussion."

This generally brings the conversation to an end.

- 2. Another way to end the conversation is to acknowledge what the person just said. Here are some ways of doing this:
 - "I *completely* understand your view on this. It was so nice to have this conversation. Thank you for your time."
 - "That's an interesting point of view. Thank you for sharing it with me."

Such statements may bring the conversation to a close without making them feel you have dismissed them or judged what they were saying, unfavorably.



Remember...

- Be an engaged listener, and a generous speaker.
- Initiate conversations when appropriate.
- Have the confidence and clarity to shape and control the conversation so it is productive for everyone involved.



Two Magic Words

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

-John F. Kennedy

At the very end of everything, appreciation is a game-changing skill

In the hectic pace we live in today, if someone makes the effort to do something for you, it must be appreciated. It is important to acknowledge and thank them for the time they took. Saying a simple thank you is also an acknowledgement of the gratitude we feel for the person. It is a sign of respect. If we do not express that, our relationship might change because it shows we don't care about the other person.

Research shows us that when we appreciate the actions of another, and even when we are being appreciated or thanked, there are clear parts of the brain which get activated and energized. Both the

hypothalamus, which controls basic bodily functions such as eating and sleeping, and dopamine, the 'reward neurotransmitter', are heavily affected by feelings of gratitude.

Expressing appreciation is thus a very important part of both personal and professional interactions. We all remember people who thanked us graciously and genuinely. It makes all the difference and we are much more likely to continue to want to associate with them. "Thank you" are the two magic words which, when expressed, make a person feel important and make them respond and do more for you.

However, these valuable words should be used with utmost genuineness. Remember, false appreciation can be spotted a mile away!

Use "thank you" in all your business communications

Saying "thank you" can be the best way to make your email polite and personal. It helps establish a connection with them, even if they are a stranger.

For example:

"Thank you for showing interest in my idea. I really appreciate it."

"I value our association. Thank you for being there."

[&]quot;Your cooperation made the difference. Thank you."

Make a physical thank-you card/note

Sometimes, it may seem uncomfortably formal to thank your close ones, your friends, teachers, boss, or colleagues. In such cases, a card or a letter saying "thank you" would do magic. If a colleague went out of their way to help you with a project, or your boss was very supportive, leaving a thank-you card on their desk is a great way to express your appreciation.

Personalize your thanks

When you say these two words, say it with a name. It makes it more personal. For example, say, "Thank you Jane, I really appreciate it."

Write a thank-you email

If you can better express your thoughts in writing, sending an email is the best way to do it. It makes both the receiver and sender happy and helps strengthen the bond between the two.

When you say it, mean it

When you say "thank you", say it from the bottom of your heart. Say it with feelings. The other person can make out if you are faking it. People can always

tell if you are not being genuine.

Make "thank you" an integral part of your communication. It truly works wonders.

Keep it real. People can always tell if you are not being genuine.



- Gratitude is a game-changer, so practise it often
- Personalise your thank-you notes
- Don't fake your gratitude; be genuine in your appreciation

8

How to Be Assertive, Not Aggressive

"The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives."

—Tony Robbins

I walked into a popular restaurant recently and heard someone talking in a very loud voice. I was intrigued because this is a good restaurant which most people enjoy eating at very much. The staff are helpful and courteous, the food is delicious, and the people who come there are, for the most part, regulars. You can thus imagine my surprise when I heard a loud, angry voice booming from a table nearby. Now, I'm a curious person by nature, so I walked over to the nearest table I could get to. I saw a guest frantically

gesticulating both at the server as well as his food. His body language was screaming anger and indignation, as were his facial expressions. He was

Persuade people to see your side of the story, don't beat them to it! very loudly telling the server how he was paying for good food and therefore he demanded nothing but the best, as well as the highest order of respect. He mentioned that he was a food critic on an online forum and that he would write an honest review of the restaurant. I zoned out of his tirade and looked around at the other people there to grab a (usually) happy lunch. Nearly everyone was staring at the guest, some with a look of disbelief.

Would you like dealing with someone as aggressive as him?

There is an important difference between being aggressive and being assertive. While aggressive communication makes people withdraw from you and want to avoid you, assertiveness makes people want to follow you. Add to this the art of persuasion and you have a winning combination.

So here is how you can learn to be assertive without being aggressive. Let us take this one step at a time.

Believe in yourself first

It all starts with confidence and self-esteem. One can only be assertive when one believes in oneself and is confident about one's opinion. Doing your homework, knowing what you're talking about, and also knowing the opposite side of it can help you convey your point assertively.

Be direct

Say things as they are, in simple words, rather than sugar-coating your standpoint and beliefs with words that others wish to hear.

Practice what you have to say

Make notes. Talk to yourself in front of a mirror. Ask a trusted friend or family member if they can listen to you present your argument and help you make it better. Invest in all of this, because I promise you that it pays off.

Be clear about who you are, what you want, and what you have to offer

Only when you have clarity will you be able to communicate what you have to say to others clearly. If you want to assert yourself, be focused and clear about what you want and expect from the other person, stating your point without any doubt.

Look confident

Look at all the elements of how you present yourself. It is about how you dress, how you speak, your body language, and your attitude. If you are speaking well but you keep fidgeting, adjusting your clothes, or failing to look at the person in the eyes, you will lose your audience as they will pick up on all these cues.

Value others' situations and emotions

Use statements such as, "I know you are busy, but I need your help," or, "I understand you are going through a tough time right now on a personal front, but I need this project completed by this weekend." What they hear is you acknowledging their situation even as you make your request, which makes it more likely for them to do what you asked them to.

Use "I" statements

Take responsibility for your feelings and thoughts and for what you stand for. Use phrases like "I think," "I feel," and "I believe." Avoid using phrases such as "You never" or "You always." For example, instead of saying, "You never check with me before making plans," say, "I feel ignored when you make plans without consulting me first."

Address your stress

Stress, anxiety, and anger often come in the way of communicating with people, but remember that your state of mind is of less concern to people over their own. Keep the communication logical and structured, while keeping your emotions in check.

Know what you're talking about

Knowing the facts about your topic of discussion or opinion and stating them makes you more assertive,

develops people's confidence in you, and makes you appear genuine.

Learn when and how to say "no"

You don't have to do everything for everyone, and nobody should expect the same of you. Giving a firm "no" is completely appropriate as long as you have a good reason and are polite. For example, if a colleague repeatedly asks you to help them with their work, you might want to state politely but firmly that you are unable to. You could say, "I'd be happy to help you as I have in the past, and yet I have my own deliverables and deadlines to meet. What you could do is make an attempt and show it to me; if there are any gaps I see, I would be happy to point them out so you could fix them."

You may have also experienced the situation of being added in WhatsApp groups which you don't want to be a part of for your own reasons. You can be polite yet assertive and excuse yourself out of the group. Perhaps you could say, "Thanks for adding me. But I am afraid I will have to exit the group. I have a lot on my plate right now and this is not a productive use of my time."



- Be mindful of your own rights, dignity, and self-esteem, and that of others as well.
- Maintain an even tone of voice, and a pleasant or a neutral facial expression.
- Use "I" statements to express how you feel about the situation.
- Be direct and honest about your feelings, goals, and intentions—keeping in mind their feelings, goals, and intentions.



The Art of Persuasion

"Character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion."

-Aristotle

I remember an incident from very early in my career—I had been trying to reach the top person in a particular organization, and after many months of following up with his assistant, she told me there was an appointment available. I went in enthusiastically, carrying all the promotional material needed and armed with a sales pitch I had practiced.

In the meeting, I began with my sales speech immediately after the introduction, knowing that I had only a short duration to make my presentation. It ended up becoming more of a fast-paced monologue. The prospect heard me patiently for 15 minutes, and at the end of my talk, he paused, looked at me, and said, "That was a wonderful presentation, but you never asked me what I wanted."

That one statement stunned me. It forever changed the way I would persuade anyone about anything. It turned out that he did want to do business with my organization, which is why he agreed to the meeting,

but it had nothing to do with what I was pitching. Thankfully, the deal went through and led to a substantial profit for the organization, but it also taught me an important lesson—understand what

Persuasion is not about you. It is about the other person. Look at things from their eyes.

the other person *needs* before persuading them to accept what you are selling.

Persuasion is a process by which you can attempt another person to agree to think, feel, behave, and act in a way that you want them to, while they believe they are doing it of their own free will. This happens when you persuade people from their point of view, rather than from your own.

Persuasion is as much an art as it is a science. To build this skill as a people magnet:

Persuade them from their world

When looking to persuade someone, find out more about them. What are they interested in? What is important and of value to them? What drives their decisions? What holds them back? What do they need? What aspect of their preferences can you appeal to? What are their long-term goals?

When you have this information, your pitch to them will be from their perspective, not from your own.

Use emotions

I remember reading a phrase by the poet Maya Angelou, which said, "People will forget what you *said*, people will forget what you *did*, but people will never forget how you *made them feel*." Emotions are stronger decision drivers than logic.

Find what drives the person. You will then be able to persuade them with ease.

Establish your credibility

People do business or build relationships only with those they trust and they like. There are two things involved here: one is the knowledge of the subject you are talking about and the other is your commitment towards the task at hand and the relationship.

Once you are equipped with these two, persuasion becomes easy.

Know your facts

Whether you are trying to persuade them to buy a product, a service, or even an idea, remember—in today's age of the internet, knowledge is at everyone's fingertips. So when you try to convince people into believing or buying something, they will first verify the information, which is as simple as searching for it on Google even as you are talking to them. I've mentioned this earlier—do your research and be prepared.

Find common ground

Only when you can understand the challenges that your audience is going through can you grab their attention and persuade them. You need be on the same page. For example, you may say, "I understand the challenge that you are facing, and here is what I have to offer."

Build a bridge—get them interested

Find out what the person is really passionate about or good at and compliment them about it. Once you have relaxed them with that, gently leading them to the direction you want them to take will be easier.

For example, you can say, "That is such an incredible painting you've made. You're very creative and it looks like a labor of love!"

Or, "I read your blog on ______. I can completely resonate with it. It touched my heart and I am sure it will impact others, too."

Here's a warning note, though: keep it sincere. The fakeness in your voice will come through if you don't.

Be clear in your communication

If you have to persuade someone, don't be ambiguous. Don't leave sentences hanging. People can't read your mind.

Be articulate and inoffensive. Remember—you have to persuade them to do something *you* want them to do. Make sure to use positive statements.

For example, instead of saying, "You always leave things scattered around," say, "It would be great if you could organize things better. You would save a lot of time."

Don't leave loose ends in your conversation. Complete your statement. Finish your topic and if something remains due to a lack of time, ask to meet up later to discuss it.

Make it a team

Using statements like, "What can we do about this?" or "We can handle it together," with an emphasis on the 'we', makes a huge impact on the other person. The person feels that they are not alone in their challenging situation. This itself will help others develop a liking for you.

Be likeable

Look at all the people magnets you know. Now look a little closer. You will find they are able to get other people to lean into their way of thinking. This is because they have already built the base of being liked by the people they are attempting to persuade. If they haven't yet, the first thing they will do is get those people to like them. Then, and only then, will they attempt to persuade them, not before that.

Finally, show that you care

This is the key to persuasion. Once people are convinced that you truly care for them or their problem, they are easy to win over.

People make decisions based on emotions and then justify them with logic.

Paradoxical as it may sound, if you find the person you're trying to persuade for something is not willingly getting persuaded, stop. Don't push them. Tell them you prefer your relationship with them, rather than the benefit you both would get out of them being persuaded.

Chances are you may lose the battle, but you will definitely win the war!



- Being persuasive starts with cultivating confidence and self-esteem.
- Be genuine and likeable. That's more than half the battle won!
- Don't be pushy when people are not ready to be persuaded yet.
- Practice and perfect your skills so that you will be able to conduct yourself effortlessly.
- Don't give up!



Give Feedback, Not Criticism

"Feedback is the breakfast of champions."

-Ken Blanchard

Feedback is letting another person know the impact of their words and their actions on another person, a task, a result, or someone's feelings. We are constantly either giving feedback or receiving it.

The problem is not that feedback is given. The issue always lies in *how* feedback is being given.

Most of the time, we hide criticism and a personal agenda in the feedback we give. And yet, a universal fact is that no one likes to be criticized. Not you, and not I. It does, however, help to be mindful of both—that we cannot *always* praise others or expect to be praised and feedback is necessary for any form of development.

If you want to be able to give powerful, assertive, and development-oriented feedback, focus on the following:

Do not get personal

Feedback is *not* about the person. It is about a task they were to do or a behavior they have displayed. When you want to offer some constructive feedback, make it objective.

Never give feedback on feedback. It makes you come across as defensive and not open to others' views.

Criticize the action or decision or outcome, not the person, and don't make judgements.

For example, it is better to say, "I don't think that the report was up to the mark—I found a lot of information missing. Is there a reason why that happened?" rather than to say, "That report was not okay. Why were you being lazy and sloppy?"

Don't get defensive

An immediate reaction—affirmation or negation—will make you come across as defensive. Absorb what is being said, ponder upon it, ask for examples if you don't agree with what is being said, and then state your point of view calmly and rationally.

Be assertive and constructive in your feedback

When you need to give feedback on a behavior, set the context of what you are talking about, acknowledge

their situation and identify the behavior you are speaking about, call out the impact of their behavior on them and others, and then say what you need to say.

For example, if someone in your office was in a grumpy mood during a meeting, you could say, "Amita, I need to speak with you about today's meeting. I know what you are going through in your personal life, and I also am mindful that you are responsible for this project. When you don't listen carefully to what is being said as happened in the meeting this morning, and you respond to people suddenly and without linking your response to the previous conversation, they get confused or they don't trust that you know what you're talking about. So, I need you to be fully present and attentive at meetings, so that you don't miss out on anything. If there is anything I can do to help with that, let me know."

Offer a solution

Whether you are the one giving the feedback or receiving it, you need to work towards a solution. If you are telling a colleague that their presentation was not up to mark, offer ideas on how to improve it next time. If someone tells you that your presentation was lacking, think about what they said and get back to them with your side of the story.

Mind your tone and body language

Do not be aggressive as you offer feedback and do not be defensive when you are at the receiving end. Stay neutral, even if you are feeling anxious or angry or nervous. Learn to keep calm and finish the conversation pleasantly.

People already know their problems. If you want them to remember you and have a great relationship with you, offer them a solution to their problem.

Never accuse anyone and do not allow yourself to be accused

If the conversation is getting heated or unpleasant, take a time out. Just say—"I think we both need to take some time and think about this. Let's talk later, when we've had a chance to cool off."

Do, however, make sure you get back to it soon.



Remember...

- Feedback is about the task, not the person.
- Always be kind and constructive.
- Avoid being aggressive or defensive, depending on which side of the story you are on.
- Offer solutions, and don't get personal.



Selling the Invisible The Art of Subtlety in Sales

"People don't like to be sold, but they love to buy!"

—Jeffrey Gitomer

What makes you buy a product or subscribe to a service? Someone hard-selling it to you, or someone explaining why it is just what you need to make your life better?

In this age of instantly available information and rapidly advancing technology, people are very well informed. The world of social media and the internet offers plenty of options and solutions to everything. People have choices like never before.

Thus selling has become an even more subtle, but powerful, art.

If you hard-sell your product, there is a greater chance of you losing the business. Sell strategically. In the age of instant everything, people look for options to what *they* need and want, not what you

have to offer. If what you have meets what they need or want, then a hard sell will not even be required.

Now, what does everyone want?

Something—anything—that makes their life better, or easier, or faster, or smoother, without being pushed into buying it. Show others the benefit to them of what you have to offer—a product, an idea, or even a thought—without a hard-sell. They will want more.

Let's say you are selling shirts. Think about what makes your shirts more unique than any other? Is it the range of colors? The fabric? Or the fact that they are well-priced?

Bring your passion

This one time I went to a popular department store to purchase a shirt. As I was trying on one I liked, the salesperson came up to me with two more shirts, saying, "These should give you a better fit." I thought he was just trying to sell more, and I asked him, "And how do you know that?" To my surprise, he replied, "Because I try on every shirt that we get, to understand how it fits, so that I can better advise my customer."

He ended up selling me three shirts instead of one.

Very often, you try to sell the product to yourselves first when you are trying to sell it to the customer because you are not convinced with it yourself. Anybody will buy what you're trying to sell if they see your conviction, your passion in it. While describing the product or even your idea, get involved in the product yourself. What will help is to use words like 'we', 'us', and 'together'. Once you're convinced about the product you are trying to sell, selling to others will become a cakewalk.

Sell what they want to buy

I recently walked into an airport bookstore in Asia to ask for a specific type of book. The manager was busy speaking to another customer who was interested in a motivational book. The manager was pointing him towards a few authors, giving him a brief about each book and the unique message that each author offered.

When it was my turn and the manager found out I was looking for something on fitness, he spoke equally passionately about health. It was interesting to see him quickly transform into a health book expert. What I realized as I walked out was that what he was truly interested in, was selling what his customers wanted to buy. This is what made him such a great salesperson.

When we are passionate about a product, an idea, a belief, or even a thought,—even obsessed with it—we do our best to sell it to the other person. The whole game, however, is about selling people what they want.

Once you understand, even master, this, the whole game of selling will turn into an art and people will want to keep coming back to buy from you!

Emphasize the advantages

It is important to look at who your customer is and what will be of value to them. Highlight the advantages accordingly. For example, for one customer, value for money may be important. Say to this customer—"You can buy five shirts from us or you can buy one from a more expensive brand that's of the same quality. We offer value for your money." For another customer exclusivity may be important. Saying to them, "You will not get to see this design anywhere else, we are the only ones with it, and this is the only piece," will make them take more notice of what you're saying.

Let them choose

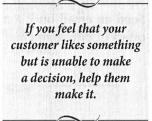
Everyone wants to feel in charge, in control, and nobody likes to be told what to do. When you tell people what to do, what to choose, it makes people feel lesser and you may be robbing them of that intrinsic need of freedom of choice that we all have. People magnets always make people feel good about themselves and hopeful of achieving their potential. Point them towards the direction you want them to think in. Give subtle hints and offer support in whatever they choose.

Understand what they are looking for

If it's busy person, for example, make them feel like what you're selling is *the* product that can solve their problem—"Imagine never having to rush through laundry on weekdays. These shirts come in great basic colors that will take you from Monday to Friday without any tension."

Appreciate their choice

Whatever they choose, it's their choice. It may be different from yours, but if they are happy and comfortable with it, so be it. Even if they are there to buy only one shirt, appreciate the one they choose.



Help them decide

If you feel that your customer likes something but is unable to make a decision, help them make it. Know what they are stuck at and help them arrive at a decision by offering help.

For example, if the person is unable to choose which color to buy, give them one or two tips on what they can match the color with.

Walk the line

There is always a thin line between selling right and selling hard. Make sure you don't cross that line. When your focus is on the other people and how they might benefit from the product, your sales interactions will be much more successful.

Keep the connection

Stay in touch with your customers, but not too often. No one likes daily or weekly emails or messages. Send an email once a month highlighting any new offers or developments. Be subtle, not pushy.



- Always highlight the uniqueness of the product, your thought/idea.
- *Tell people why it is beneficial to* them.
- Do not force a purchase—if they don't buy anything, be very pleasant and helpful so they come back later; if they disagree with your thought, let it go.
- Sell what people want (or need) and not what you want them to want.



Modern Day Communication Using Digital Media

"Science and technology revolutionize our lives, but memory, tradition and myth frame our response."

-Arthur M. Schlesinger

Make email, phone calls, social media, and messaging your best tools

Technology has completely taken over our lives and greatly influenced the way we communicate and deal with people. The way business is conducted has undergone a major shift in the last couple of decades. Physical meetings are often replaced by Skype calls or video conferencing and Whatsapp chats are more popular than conversations over coffee. Building relationships and networking has experienced a turnaround with social media taking over. We see people glued to their smartphones most of the times, either talking to someone or typing a message or checking their email.

While technology can seem either very simple or very intimidating, the truth is that it is just another form of communication, so the basics remain the same. What you need, however, is to update your skillset and I find, actually, that it becomes so much easier to communicate once you know how to use these tools well.

Telephone Skills

As I have discussed earlier, when you speak to someone in person, a variety of factors come into play. When you are on the phone with someone, however, they cannot read your facial expressions, study your body language, or observe your gestures. Everything has to be communicated verbally, so clarity of both thought and voice is key.

The right time

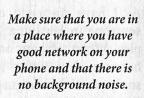
I am not a fan of 'cold calling' someone unless it is an absolute emergency. I also make it a point to never make a professional call on the weekend, unless it's an emergency. Nowadays, we all carry our phones with us everywhere and it is easy to make a call to just about anyone at any time. It is good to remember that we might be disturbing someone by calling them without their permission.

It is always a good idea to at least send a message before you call: "Hello. May I please call you for an urgent conversation?"

The right place

When you are scheduling a professional phone call with someone, choose to do so when you are going to be either in the office or in some other quiet place where you will neither be interrupted nor be disturbed by noises. Set an agenda and a time limit on the conversation and ask if it works for them.

For example: "May we please speak for 20 to 30 minutes on Wednesday at 11 A.M., to discuss the upcoming conference? Please let me know if there is anything else that you would like us to talk about as well."



The right preparation

Then, make sure you are prepared *and* ready for that call. I always set an alarm on my phone to ring 15 minutes before the call is scheduled. I find this useful because:

- (a) Sometimes, when you are really caught up with your day with all the things you need to do and accomplish, it is easy to forget that you have to make a call.
- (b) That 15-minute interval gives you time to think about what you want to say, to get a drink of water or cup of coffee, make sure

that you are in a quiet place where no-one will disturb you, and it helps you calm down any nervousness you may be feeling.

Make sure that you are in a place where you have good network on your phone and that there is no background noise. The person on the other end of the line will not be able to focus on what you are saying if there is something distracting in the background. While many people like to have phone calls while they are commuting, I find that a bit tricky because you might lose network or traffic sounds can drown you out. Avoid this unless it is the only time that you or the other person are free.

Jot down your major talking points so you don't miss out on anything important you may want to say or address. Do avoid reading off the paper however, as it will not allow you to sound natural.

Beginning your call

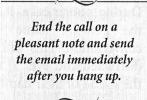
As mentioned earlier, start with a cheerful greeting. During phone calls, it is also a good idea to take the person's name intermittently during the conversation. This will prevent them from getting distracted and even if their attention is elsewhere, the sound of their name will help them focus again.

Even if you are discussing something very serious or maybe even something that is difficult to talk about, keep your voice clear and positive. If it is appropriate, be cheerful but please do not laugh too loudly or too long. It is very distracting on a phone call.

Please do not fidget with things or let your mind drift away as the other person speaks.

Refer to the talking points you jotted down earlier. Also make notes of what the other person is saying, especially if you want to respond to it without interrupting them, if they mention something important, or if it is something you need to or would like to follow up on. In general, this is a good principle to follow even for in-person meetings. Please do not fidget with things or let your mind drift away as the other person speaks. They will be able to easily tell if you are distracted. You might even miss an important piece of information or a question they are asking you. All this will make you come across as unprofessional or disinterested—definitely not 'people magnet traits.

Avoid keeping the person on hold to take another call or talk to someone in the room. If you have to do so in case of an emergency, be polite, excuse yourself and apologize. Get back to the call as soon as possible.



Watch your pauses while talking and give time and space to the other person to talk. In case you need

to interrupt them, say something very polite such as—"May I interrupt you, please? I would like to add something important here." If they keep interrupting you more times than necessary, say very firmly—"I would appreciate it if you let me finish my point, so I can focus on what you have to say."

Keep an eye on the time. It is easy to let phone calls go on for much longer.

End the call on a pleasant note and send the email immediately after you end the call.

Text Messaging and WhatsApp Skills

Always be aware that a message is an intrusion on someone's time. Just because it is not like a call that needs to be answered does not mean that you can send messages at all hours. Try and send your messages during working hours and between Monday to Friday.

Keep the message short, clear, polite, and without any mistakes.

Do not send someone a message over text and on WhatsApp at the same time unless they specifically asked you to do so. It is unnecessary.

Always be aware that a message is an intrusion on someone's time.

Do not use short forms or emoticons in professional messages. Type out the words fully and only use abbreviations where necessary.

Email Skills

Emails are now the most important form of business communication. While they are extremely effective, they can be even more one-sided than a phone call since you do not know by when you can expect a reply, and you have to get it right the first time. There is no chance to correct yourself immediately as you can when you speak. That said, I find that emails are also the easiest tool of communication because they do not intrude on someone's time and you can be very clear about what you have to say. Also, emails are always on record so for very important matters, they can be useful. This does mean, however, that you need to exercise caution while sending professional emails.

There are some basic ground rules to follow that I encourage people to not take lightly.

Use your official email account—especially the one that is given to you by your company—for official work only. Do not forward jokes, or send personal emails, or gossip about your boss or colleagues. It is not only unprofessional but it can also get you into trouble.

Create a signature that mentions your name, designation, company name, postal address of the office, your landline number at work along with the extension and your mobile number. Add your company's website to this as well.

Try to reply to emails within 24 hours of receiving them. If you are waiting for some information or do not have the time to write a long reply, at least send a short reply acknowledging the email and giving the person an explanation.

Always set an out-of-office message when you travel, whether for work or on personal holidays.

Writing good emails

Be very clear about what you want the email to achieve. Why are you writing it? What do you need from them, or how can you help them? Do you have a deadline that they should reply by? Are you giving them all the information that they need?

Use a clear font in black. I recommend Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri or Garamond in 12 point size. Please do not write emails in a colorful font or use overly large font sizes. And no emoticons! Emoticons do not send across a professional impression and are considered one of the top 3 sins of email writing, to the extent that people have been known to miss out on job opportunities because of them.

Have an appropriate subject line

The subject line of your email should speak about the purpose of your email. It should capture the interest of the receiver. It also helps in searching for the email in their inbox in the future. Using all caps in the subject line is considered rude.

Well begun is half done!

If you don't know the person, you could start with a brief introduction, allowing the person to get to know who you are. If you have a LinkedIn profile or your bio on the company website, add a hyperlink to it, so they can get the information they need.

If you know the person already, you can start with a greeting and a personal note. This sets the foundation for building the connection: "I hope you are keeping well."

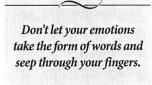
Start by saying, "I am writing to you today to…" This sets the tone and gives the reader a clear idea of what to expect.

Keep it short and simple

Your email should be very brief and to the point, especially if it is a business email. In today's world, most people do not have the time to read long emails. If you are going on and on, people may simply leave it for later or ignore it completely. I sometimes use bullet points, which make the email easier to read. In fact, I like to highlight important points in bold, if necessary, especially if I need the reader to respond to that matter. For example, "When we spoke last week, we had discussed the possibility of setting up a meeting with our superiors. I have spoken to my boss and he is also keen on this—are you and your boss free to meet next week?"

Draft it and read it

Proofreading is extremely important. Make sure there are no spelling mistakes or grammatical errors. Use spell-check. Drafting an email and rereading it before you send



it is extremely useful, especially when an email is being written or responded to on a sensitive subject or with someone you have strained relations with.

Re-reading and editing the mail before you send it ensures you take out the (negative) emotions you may be feeling. This helps maintain relationships!

Ending your email

Make sure you list out any call for action and/or any responsibilities with timelines.

Sign off by thanking them for their time: "I appreciate you taking the time to read this and look forward to hearing from you."

Modern, business-appropriate sign-offs include "Warmly," "Best," and "Regards."

Social Media Skills

Social media is an excellent platform for building relationships and networking. At the same time, the way you conduct yourself on social media speaks volumes about you and can influence your professional life considerably.

My first piece of advice would be to separate your personal and professional life online as much as possible. Some other social media tips that people magnets rely on are:

- Do not add all of your colleagues and your bosses to your Facebook account. If you would like to use Facebook to keep in touch with professional contacts, create a separate account. This will allow you to maintain your privacy and keep your professional boundaries clear.
- Instagram and Snapchat are much more personal social media platforms so I would actually advise you to keep them as out of limits to your professional contacts as possible. If you have to use Instagram for work, create a separate account.
- On a platform such as Twitter or blogs, on which you might share opinions, be sure to add a disclaimer—"All opinions shared here are my own and do not reflect those of my organization."
- Create a good LinkedIn profile and update it as necessary. It is a great tool for networking and for staying in touch with professional contacts.

- On any platform and any account—personal or professional—never gossip about, complain about, or defame your organization, colleagues, boss, or anyone else. It is both very unprofessional and unkind and could land you in trouble. People magnets will always make sure they are only highlighting the good in other human beings.
- Use your full name and a good photo in your professional accounts. Share correct and brief information about what you do and who you are without revealing too much about your personal life.
- If you get a friend request from someone, evaluate and research the person before accepting it.
- Respect other people's decisions. If someone doesn't want to be connected with you, accept it gracefully. Do not keep sending them requests.
- Don't send a friend request to a total stranger.
- Stay in touch with your contacts by occasionally sending them message, greetings, or birthday wishes. This takes only a second and is a nice gesture.
- Do like a post or picture posted by your friend and write a comment if and when possible.



Remember...

- Always use spell check and write clearly.
 No emoticons, no all-caps, and no short forms.
- Be respectful of other people's time.
- Do not bombard others with any form of communication. Give them the time and space they need to respond.
- Present your best self at all times and on all platforms.

Thank You

And that wraps up this journey we've been on together.

I've had as much fun in writing this book as I'm sure you've had in reading it.

A book, however, is only as good as the people reading it. Learn from it, pick up nuances, and apply them to your own life, in your own situations, and watch the magic unfold.

Go out there and meet people. Put your best foot forward. Reach out your hand and be the first one to break the ice. Listen to words, and listen to emotions. Ask questions that show them you care. Make someone shine by appreciating them for things they value. Make someone feel they matter by giving them your precious time and attention. Give them feedback that helps them grow. They will remember you for it.

Dance in conversation with others—you now have all the moves!

Here's to you being a powerful people magnet!





21ST CENTURY GUIDE WITH MODERN PRINCIPLES

This handbook captures the essence of people skills. The ability to effectively deal with people gives you an advantage - both socially and professionally.

Updated for the internet age, the author gives you a number of tips on using social media and technology to expand your influence and improve your skills in dealing with people.